

Kentucky Department of Education

Designing High-Quality Local Curriculum Pilot Application



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KDE HQLC Pilot Application

Table of Contents

Pilot Overview

[Context and Need](#)

[Introduction to the Pilot](#)

[Program Timeline and Participation Expectations](#)

[Year 1](#)

[Year 2](#)

[Inform Statewide Learning](#)

[District Assurances](#)

Application Information

[Selection process](#)

[Instructions for Submission](#)

[Criteria for Scoring](#)

Pilot Overview

Context and Need

Following the unprecedented interruptions to learning resulting from COVID-19, states, districts, and schools are now working to retool their systems and structures to ensure they are able to equitably support all students. Recognizing the importance of the development of a high-quality local curriculum, including the selection of high-quality instructional resources and professional development, in its efforts to equitably support all students, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is embarking on a pilot to support districts and schools in this area, connected to the [Model Curriculum Framework](#).

Now more than perhaps ever, there is a great need for schools and districts to develop coherent curriculum that intentionally connects standards, instruction and assessment across classrooms. In their book *Leaders of Learning*, Dufour and Marzano (2011) state how today's educators are being called upon to raise academic standards to the highest level in history and to help every student reach these higher levels of achievement. Within schools in America, large racial and socioeconomic gaps still exist among graduation rates, test scores and advanced proficiency. In order for educators to meet the challenge of helping all students master standards, they must have a clear vision of what best practice teaching and learning is and a clear road map to follow throughout the year (Ainsworth, 2010).

In the process of developing high-quality curriculum, Kentucky schools and districts must consider the following questions:

- What is the difference between standards and curriculum and instructional resources?
- What is meant by a guaranteed, viable curriculum?

KDE HQLC Pilot Application

- How do standards, curriculum and instructional resources work together to help create equity for all students in Kentucky?

The *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS)* contain the minimum requirements of what students should know and be able to do by the end of each grade level. The standards address a foundational framework of what is to be learned. They help to answer the first question of the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process, “What do we want students to learn?” The purpose of the *KAS* is to ensure all students across Kentucky focus on a common set of standards and are provided opportunities to learn at high levels. While the standards address what is to be learned, they do not address how learning experiences are to be designed or what instructional resources are to be used.

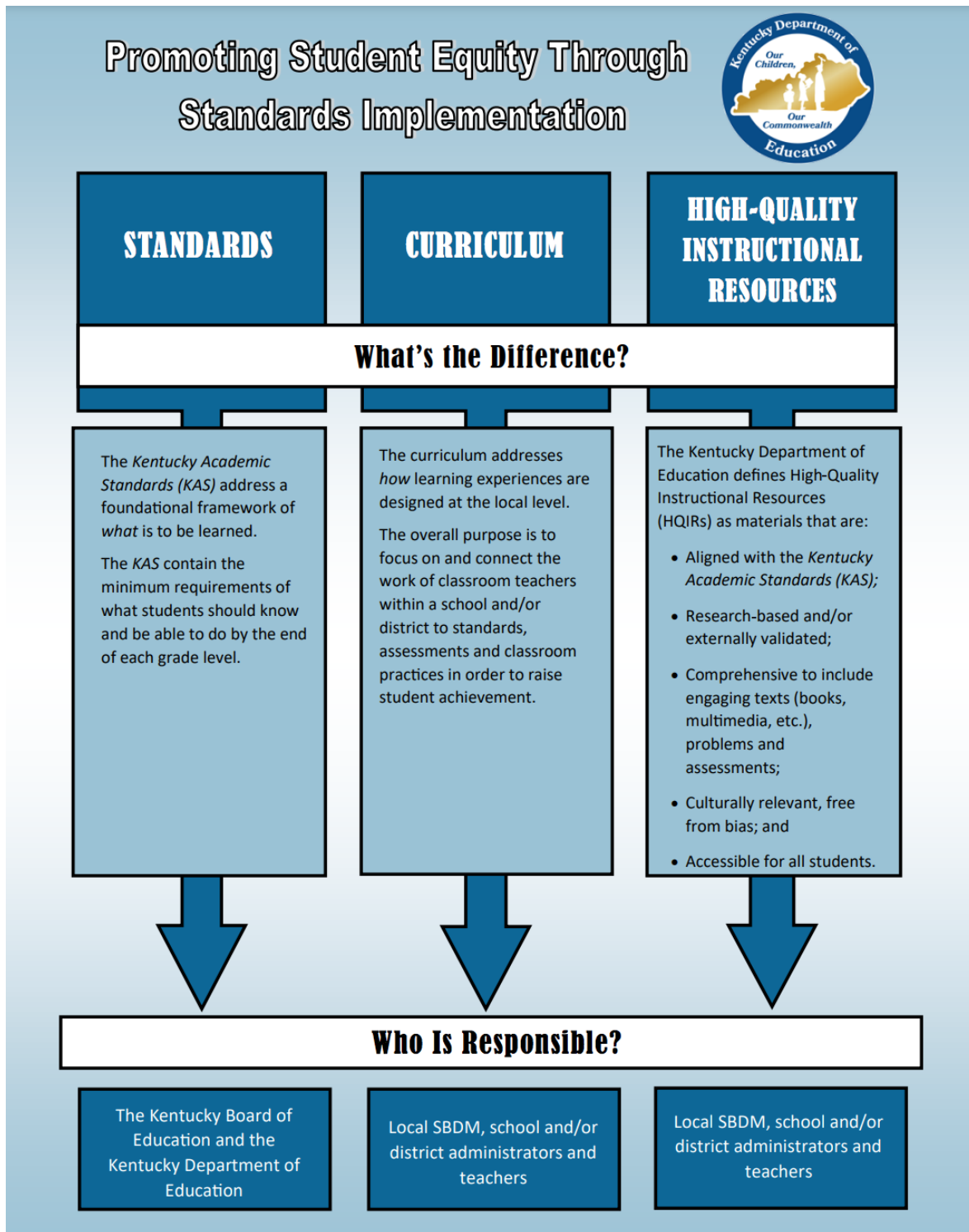
Curriculum is derived from a Latin word meaning “a course or path run in small steps.” It addresses how learning experiences are designed at the local level. The overall purpose of curriculum is to focus on and connect the work of classroom teachers within a school and/or district to standards, assessments and classroom practices in order to raise student achievement. Curriculum includes the vast array of pedagogy, readings, learning experiences, instructional resources and local mechanisms of assessment, including the full body of content knowledge to be covered, all of which are to be selected at the local level according to Kentucky law (KRS 160.345).

Instructional resources, as defined by 704 KAR 3:455, include all the print, nonprint or electronic medium designed to assist student learning. Oftentimes, instructional resources, such as vendor programs, textbooks and online products are mistakenly referred to and/or utilized as a school or district ‘s curriculum. While these resources may support the implementation of a high-quality curriculum, they do not comprise the full scope of support found in a true standards-aligned curriculum.¹

High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs), as defined by the Kentucky Department of Education , are materials that are:

- Aligned with the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS)*
- Research-based and/or externally validated
- Comprehensive to include engaging texts (books, multimedia, etc.), problems and assessments
- Culturally relevant, free from bias
- Accessible for all students.

¹ Model Curriculum Framework, pg. 5-6



² Figure 1.1 Defining Standards, Curriculum and Instructional Resources from the Model Curriculum Framework, pg. 5-6

KDE HQLC Pilot Application

Introduction to the Pilot

There is greater potential for sustained impact and increased student outcomes when there is aligned work at the state, district and school level. We seek for this pilot to serve as a model for multi-level, multi-year engagements that produce best practices for instructional leadership across the state.

The pilot will focus on Phases 1-4 of the Curriculum Development Process outlined in the Kentucky [Model Curriculum Framework](#), specifically:

Year 1 (2021-2022) Phase 1: Preparing the Curriculum Development Process, Phase 2: Planning and Professional Learning, and Phase 3: Developing the Curriculum.

- Articulation of a program philosophy that aligns with the *Kentucky Academic Standards* and best practices for reading and writing
- Creation of a local curriculum aligned to the *Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing*
- Cohort-based professional learning, focused on evaluating and selecting high-quality instructional resources aligned to support implementation of the local curriculum aligned to the *Kentucky Academic Standards*
- One-on-one support to schools and districts to contextualize and implement learning
- School site observations and joint discussions with school and district leadership

Year 2 (2022-2023) Phase 4 - Implementing and Monitoring the Curriculum

- Ongoing planning and progress monitoring of local curriculum and HQR implementation
- Year-long district-level coaching support, based on identified local priorities and focus areas
- Year-long school-level coaching support, individualized to meet schools' unique needs

The Kentucky Department of Education, alongside the Achievement Network (ANet), will provide support to reach these outcomes. Founded in 2005, ANet is a nonprofit dedicated to creating **educational equity** for all students. We work towards educational equity by partnering with school and district leaders to support great teaching - teaching that is grounded in standards, shaped by data, and built upon the successful practices of educators across the country. A key element of ANet's work to increase educational equity is our awareness that inequities persist along the lines of race, culture, socio-economics, and privilege. ANet aims to take actions grounded in this awareness to deepen our partnerships with schools because we believe every student deserves opportunity in life.

Program Timeline

The timeline below gives an overview of the desired timeframes and outcomes of the pilot in years 1 and 2, as well as roles and responsibilities of districts and schools.

	October- November 2021	December 2021- February 2022	January- May 2022	May- June 2022	July 2022- June 2023
District Support	Application and Selection	System Reviews	District Level Support Pilot	Implementation Support	Implementation Support
School Support			School Level Reviews	Optional Year End Support	Implementation Support

KDE HQLC Pilot Application

Year 1

Application and Selection: October 18, 2021-November 23, 2021

We are seeking the participation of 32 schools and up to 12 districts, representative of 8 regional cooperatives. This would account for participation of 2-3 schools per district. An information session will be held on November 1 to support the application process. The application process will consist of answering a few questions and uploading artifacts. Districts and schools will be notified of acceptance prior to winter break. More details on the application and selection process can be found below.

District-Level System Review: December 2021 - ongoing

For selected districts ANet will start a system review alongside each district. The system review will provide each district with key insights about strengths and areas of improvement relative to local curriculum development and instructional resources strategy and implementation, recommending several next steps and priorities to accelerate outcomes for students. KDE and ANet will work together throughout this engagement to ensure alignment to statewide priorities and initiatives. The system review will include **up to four meetings per district** and will engage multiple stakeholder groups (i.e. district leadership, school leadership, teacher-leaders). Leadership teams will collaborate with ANet to either facilitate focus groups or administer stakeholder surveys as soon as possible. Each district will receive a brief summary of the findings and recommendations.

District-Level Support: January 2022 - May/June 2022

Following the system review process, the KDE and ANet will implement and facilitate a cohort-based pilot focused on preparing for the curriculum development process, planning and professional learning for the Curriculum Development Committee, and developing the local curriculum and the instructional resources implementation. These actions are aligned to the Model Curriculum Framework as the key engagement for participating districts starting in January 2022 and continuing through May 2022. There will be approximately **three districts in each cohort including 2-3 schools**, for a total of **four cohorts**, and up to **five participants per district**.

The KDE and ANet will facilitate **five two hour professional learning cohort sessions** for district leaders to engage in group learning and **four 90-minute individualized coaching sessions with each district and its participants** and an ANet Coach, to contextualize and take individualized action on cohort learnings.

The KDE and ANet will work closely with key district stakeholders to identify a subset of areas to prioritize in this engagement based on the strengths, needs, and opportunities of participating districts. These focus areas will guide partnership planning action steps and progress monitoring, serving as the north star for this engagement. Focus areas may include:

- Drafting a shared program philosophy and theory of action that articulates the role high-quality curriculum and instructional resources play in enabling equitable literacy instruction.
- Identifying and analyzing existing curriculum and instructional resources available in the school or district to determine how well those align to the *Kentucky Academic Standards* using research-based criteria and/or evidence gathered from a review committee on the quality of the resources.
- Considering additional standards-aligned, high-quality instructional resources to fill any gaps in existing resources.
- Creating guidance and recommendation documents for the use of resources in the system that represent a working group for stakeholder feedback and later finalization. This includes guidance for the use of resources to ensure equitable access to grade level content for all students, especially those that have

KDE HQLC Pilot Application

been historically underserved and/or who struggled the most during distance learning.

- Develop a professional learning plan aligned to funds available to the district or school, as well as the relationship to the Comprehensive Improvement Plan at the school or district level.
- Identifying areas of professional learning necessary to help teachers implement the curriculum. Questions the team may consider include:
 - Are there areas of identified best practice in the articulated philosophy in which there is currently little evidence of implementation in classrooms across the school or district?
 - Are there specific needs for elementary versus secondary?
 - What type of professional learning is needed to support school leaders in understanding the curriculum and monitoring for evidence of implementation in the classrooms?
 - Is professional learning needed to assist teachers in selecting and utilizing instructional resources to engage students in standards-based, grade-appropriate assignments?

School-Level Support: *February 2022 - May 2022*

A key part of the information-gathering process is the school review. This is designed to help us deeply understand the context of the local school and its community, thus helping school-level leaders internalize their successes and challenges, identify opportunities for growth, and develop a baseline for success. These reviews consist of interviews with key members of the school team. ANet will help schools determine the current state of foundational conditions against key criteria and better plan support based on the school's specific strengths and needs. The process is grounded in understanding the current state of the following focus areas:

- Prioritization of alignment and data to inform teaching and learning
- Schedule and time commitment required to advance instruction through teacher collaboration, classroom observation, and student intervention
- Dedicated leadership to deepen impact across the school, observing and giving feedback on teacher planning and instruction
- Culture of learning, where feedback is valued to improve practice and sharing data and practices is valued as a tool for adult learning
- Standards-based planning/instruction and teacher knowledge of instructional standards.

Each school review includes **1-2 context building conversations, roughly 90 minutes each**, with key members of instructional leadership teams. ANet also conducts **one on-site, half-day school visit**, which may include district-level discussions alongside school leadership.

Optional End of Year Coaching and/or Summer Planning: Following the school review process, ANet is offering all participating schools the opportunity to begin the initial onboarding process, start summer planning around academic priorities, and/or continue foundational learning associated with findings of the school review. We anticipate that each school who opts into this offering will have **up to 3 additional interactions** between May 2022 and July 2022.

Year 2

Year 2 support will help to ensure that the intended curriculum truly becomes the implemented curriculum. ANet will support school and district leaders to create a plan for supporting and monitoring implementation

KDE HQLC Pilot Application

including data collection to determine what is working, what is not working and what is needed to improve as aligned to the appropriate depth of the Kentucky Academic Standards for Reading and Writing.

District-Level Coaching: *June 2022 - June 2023*

ANet's district support includes **15 system-level coaching interactions** throughout the school year. At minimum, we expect to meet with district leadership once per month over the course of the year. In planning for this partnership, ANet will work with key stakeholders to narrow in on a set of outcomes or areas of focus, which will include a subset of the following:

- Defining structures and supports for how instructional resources, instruction, assessment and professional learning support the articulated program philosophy and theory of action ensuring effective implementation
- Change leadership support and ongoing strategic communications planning that results in timely and consistent communication to key stakeholders to solicit input for continued implementation
- Progress monitoring support focused on how curriculum and instructional resources implementation is meeting the needs of all learners, with recommended next steps
- Classroom observations, alongside district stakeholders, to 1) calibrate on what high quality implementation of the curriculum and instructional resources looks like and 2) assess quality of initial implementation with specific recommendations based on observations
- Feedback to district teams and CAOs on how their roles are supporting implementation, resulting in recommended next steps
- District leaders' strengthening knowledge of standards and shifts in Reading and Writing
- Strengthening processes to support coherence across departments and between schools and departments
- Defining the PL plan to address gaps/needs identified in advising phase and to support internalization of the local curriculum, HQIRs, and equitable instruction (could tie into PLCs and planning team meetings)
- Feedback to leaders/teachers grounding in the common language and instructional vision.

School-Level Coaching: *July 2022 - June 2023*

ANet's school partnership model is based around our theory of action, which states that developing school leadership is key to ensuring equitable, standards-aligned instruction for all students. In ANet's school partnership, each school's instructional leadership team works alongside a dedicated ANet coach throughout the school year. The ANet coach creates a yearlong plan for coaching and professional learning that addresses the school's instructional needs and priorities. ANet coaches are veteran teachers and school leaders who act as expert thought-partners and resources to improve leader practice. Our school-level partnership includes:

- Roughly **20 interactions at each school** with a dedicated ANet coach, ten of which will be virtual and ten in person. A school's ANet coach learns about the school's strengths and needs, then works alongside the leadership team to support rigorous instruction that is grounded in a deep knowledge of the standards, shaped by data, and built on strong practices of great educators across the country.
- Unlimited access to ANet's online platform that provides educators with easy-to-understand data and instructional resources in math and reading and writing. These resources enable them to plan rigorous, standards-aligned lessons and adjust instruction based on student understanding.
- Diagnostic assessments that enable educators to more precisely gauge amplified learning loss of content that may not have been learned or taught.

KDE HQLC Pilot Application

- Access to the best practices of our network of partner schools delivered through professional development convenings throughout the school year.

Inform Statewide Learning

This pilot will not only support local districts and schools in their development of a local curriculum, but will also inform the KDE's work in this area moving forward. Feedback will be regularly collected to understand district and school experience in the pilot. Participating districts and schools will regularly share information, artifacts, and data that informs KDE of pilot progress to help not only measure the effectiveness of the pilot, but also inform future work across the state.

District Assurances

Participating Districts will be asked to commit to the following:

- Must identify 2-3 schools who will be willing to participate in the pilot and year long implementation.
- Must ensure their district team is willing to participate in the pilot and year long implementation.
- Commit to project for both the pilot and year long implementation at both the district and school level (through June 2023).
- Consistent, active participation of pilot cohort members in both cohort and one-on-one coaching sessions.
- Adopt and/or take steps to improve the quality of implementation of local curriculum and high quality instructional resources **at least within** the pilot schools.
- Fully participate in the program and collect data for an additional 2 years.
- Disclose the use of widely-used instructional resources within the district.

Application Information

Selection process

We are seeking the participation of up to 32 schools within 12 districts, representative of 8 regional cooperatives. This would account for participation of approximately 2-3 schools per district. A selection committee will review all completed applications submitted by the November 23 deadline. Consideration will also be given to geographic distribution of districts and accountability model performance distribution of districts.

Instructions for Submission

Interested districts shall complete and submit an online form, hereafter known as the “**Application**” on behalf of the school(s), by Tuesday, November 23 at 5:00 p.m. ET to be considered for selection as a pilot site. Technical assistance will be provided via a [Zoom meeting](#) on Monday, November 1 from 5:00-6:00 p.m. ET. All applications must include a valid signature from the district superintendent.

Criteria for Scoring

Districts and/or schools with completed applications will be considered for possible inclusion in the pilot program based upon scores using the following criteria, with some consideration given to regional geographic distribution and accountability system distribution across the state.

- District and School Investment
 - Interest in project

KDE HQLC Pilot Application

- Connection between project and school/ district priorities
- District and School Capacity
 - Availability of school and district leaders to take on the pilot
 - Connection of project goals to other job related duties
- Teaching and Learning Structures
 - District structures for professional development
 - School structures for professional development
- Current Resources in Use
 - HQIR already in use
 - Or, commitment to adopting HQIR for the 22-23 school year

PLEASE NOTE: Handwritten, faxed, and scanned applications will not be accepted.

Interested and want to apply? [Click here.](#)

Access Superintendent Signature Form [here](#)